1953

A HISTORY OF STATION WORO

It is a pleasure to be here tonight and to participate in this birthday party. I recall very vividly the evening -- one year ago tonight -- when we gathered in similar fashion to mark the opening of WORO's broadcasting facilities. Again I have been asked to take part in the presentation of the history of the station. It is actually a short story in the telling -- yet it is a history of more than just one year.

The history of WORO is actually the history of the University of Maine Radio Guild. Originally the Radio Guild was a workshop group made up of students from radio speech classes. In the year 1936-37 there was not a very active club, at least not one with a constitution and which held regular meetings and all that. There were, however, students who wanted to broadcast and so there were programs which were ~~broadcast~~ heard over station WLBZ in Bangor. During the period from 1937 to 1941, under Mr. Delwin B. Dusenbury of the Speech Department -- regular broadcasts were made a part of the University's extra-curricular activities. Programs then originated in the Lord Hall studios of the campus. There were sometimes 4 or 5 programs a week, using music, news, drama and information on Home Economics as subject matter. A student announcer was at that time employed by WLBZ to help organize, prepare and present the various radio shows.

During World War II, and while the student body was growing smaller - programs from the University continued to be heard. Direction of these programs was by Mr. John B. Roberts and later by Mr. James Platt of the Speech Department. Many musical and also dramatic productions were regularly attempted. Some of these were broadcast from the University's Little Theatre stage and auditorium.

It was in 1946 that a definite change took place and students began to have a greater role to play in the activities of University Radio. Mrs. Phyllis D. Williamson realized the need for a student organization which could produce and direct and provide talent for regular broadcasts. Studios were moved from Lord Hall and productions were thereafter scheduled in Stevens Hall. In the period from 1946 to 1949 the University of Maine Radio Guild was formed and it grew in strength and friendship. Members of this group acknowledged the fact that progress could come only from united effort. Radio, as an industry, had become during the war a more regular and dependable service to the American public. The Radio Guild wished to become the regular and dependable producing group for campus radio. Therefore, a constitution was written and accepted. Under its conditions weekly programs were continued -- a system of awards for participants was established -- dues were paid by members and contests both of script writing and announcing were sponsored. Students during those three years were busily active in determining broadcast policy, and they were also learning the skills of radio.

In the Fall of the year 1949 -- a new direction was again apparent. Students realized that other schools, colleges and universities had radio stations of their own. Some of these were licensed and some were unlicensed or <u>wired-wireless</u> stations. Several persistent people from the Radio Guild insisted that the University of Maine could also have a radio station. They set about the work to prove that they were right. They consulted with Mrs. Williamson, other members of the Speech Department and with the Committee on Administration. They also began to raise money to purchase necessary equipment for a wired-wireless station. Prominent members of the Guild to do the ground work were Bruce Schwab of the Electrical

Engineering Department and Keith Fowles of the college of Arts and Sciences. A plan for the proposed station was published and the construction of a transmitter was begun.

The graduating classes of 1950 of 1951 and 1952 each donated a sum of $500 to pay for the transmitter and the studio and the studio equipment which would all be necessary. These gifts were greatly appreciated as was a gift also from funds of the President, Dr. Arthur Hauck. The transmitter was completed in 1951 and studio changes were completed in 1952.

In 1952 it became part of my duties to advise the Radio Guild. In the Fall of that year we set about the task of coupling the transmitter to the power lines of the campus. Finally, the transmitter was located in Estabrooke Hall, and in February 1953 -- one year ago tonight -- WORO went on the air. A special celebration marked the event.

Tonite we celebrate the first birthday of our campus station, althogh as you can see -- it is only the regular programming of the station which has existed but one year. The ideas and the events behind this year of activity now ending -- are of significant age. And, too, we believe that the one birthday candle which we are given today is only a beacon light on the path which leads to later years.

I would like briefly to mention a few events of the past twelve months. A constitution for the Radio Guild was rewritten and approved. The Department of Speech has continued its support and has materially provided for our welfare in terms of sound effects records and a new microphone. A contract with RCA recording company has furnished WORO with exceleent classics of music. A contract with Lucky Strike Cigarettes (American Tobacco Co.) has provided a United Press radio news teletype service. The station manager, Mike Boyd, decided to

extend the number of hours of programs on the station to a total of four each evening. This past Fall -- local advertising was sought for the first time -- and five local business men have decided to use our facilities. A football game from ~~KINGS~~ston Rhode Island was brought to the campus by WORO -- where no other broadcast was available of the Maine-Rhode Island game. And, recently, during Final Examinations, late afternoon broadcasts from 3 to 7:30 P.M. were specially conducted for WORO listeners.

At present 68 students share in the activities of your campus radio station. With me, I am sure, all of these people are pleased to know that we enjoy the continued goodwill of this community. They join me in saying thank you for your support and interest. We hope to continue to serve -- you.

Prof. T. Russell Woolley
Faculty Adviser
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